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ABSTRACT

In the very near future, in many types of occupations, participation in some form of continuing educational experience is going to become virtually a necessity. Many professional societies and associations have committees studying requirements and making recommendations to membership for maintaining professional updating. Therefore, we must start now to lay the groundwork for the future situation as we conceive it will probably be. A structural element on which to organize continuing education experience is the Continuing Education Unit (CEU), which will make recordkeeping possible. The history of the CEU development began with a National Planning Conference at which various points of view were presented. The need for a uniform unit of measurement for non-credit continuing education activities was recognized, as was the role of the consumer of the educational product. A task force was organized to conduct a feasibility study for a uniform measurement unit to be used, and the CEU was the product of the study. Designed to give recognition for organized but non-credit continuing education experiences, the CEU meets the needs of this educational area. (AG)

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NEEDED - A UNIFORM UNIT TO MEASURE ONE'S CONTINUING EDUCATION

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A speech prepared for use at the Annual Conference of the National Association of University Evening Colleges, San Francisco, Calif.
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It is a real pleasure to meet with you here on the opposite side of the continent from my home base of operations. My subject today is: Needed - A Uniform Unit to Measure One's Continuing Education. Your program chairman and committee invited me to discuss this subject at your annual conference since many of you are responsible for offering continuing education programs in the form of short courses, conferences, workshops for professional updating and avocational purposes in your evening college programs.

I would like to call your attention to this chart (The Division of Continuing Education) which I feel in a unique way dramatizes the large proportion of an individual's life during which he is a candidate for some form of continuing education.

At present, this large area represents primarily unrealized potential, as far as the vast majority of our population is concerned. In the very near future, in many types of occupations, participation in some form of continuing educational experience is going to become virtually a necessity. As this increasingly becomes the case, we will find that more and more of this large unfilled area will become blacked-out by continuing education activities.

Some very far-sighted prophets forsee that formal or organized education will ultimately continue throughout a person's productive lifetime. That, of course, is pretty far down the road. However, many professional societies and associations have committees studying requirements and making recommendations to membership for maintaining professional updating. Therefore, we must start now to lay the groundwork for the future situation as we conceive it will probably be.

Since the continuing education portion of one's life covers such a large span of time, it is imperative that his educational activities exhibit some organization or structure. Over a person's life this will represent probably around forty-five years. Without this structure or organization, efforts at continuing education will inevitably become very haphazard and confused. They probably won't reflect an orientation toward a definite goal. Certainly it will be difficult to ascertain one's progress without some points of reference along the way.

It thus seems apparent that a first and fundamental step in preparing for the future would be the establishment of some structural element around which to organize this educational experience. This structural element or building block has been conceived as a unit of credit which is temporarily being referred to as the "continuing education unit" or the "C E U."

Such a unit will make it possible for the participant, educational institutions, employers, government, and all persons or institutions interested in keeping records of such learning experiences, to have some way of accounting for work done. As people in our society expend more and more time, money and energy upon continuing education, they will inevitably demand some system for keeping track of where they have been educationally, as well as to plan ahead their future educational demands. This is no less true for the educational institutions involved. They must have some accounting system around which to make their plans.

It is from the vantage point of this inevitable need that I want to present to you some current developments along this line.

I am currently serving as the chairman of the National University Extension Asscciation's Committee on a Uniform Unit of Measurement for Non-Credit Continuing Education and as chairman of a National Task Force on the Feasibility of a Uniform Unit of Measurement for the Recognition of Continuing Education. It is upon this experience that I draw in making the following comments.

I think that I should fill you in on a bit of the background and bring you up to date on developments in this area.

On July 1 and 2 of this year in Washington, D. C., a National Planning Conference was held to explore current needs, uses and feasibility of a uniform unit of measurement for non-credit continuing education programs. The conference was sponsored by the U. S. Office of Education, U. S. Civil Service Commission, American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers and the National University Extension Association.

Invitations were sent to nine national education associations, fifteen professional and technical societies, three business and trade associations, two labor organizations, thirteen federal agencies, six private sector interests and three quasi-public organizations. These groups represented a cross-section of business, industry, labor, colleges, universities, federal agencies and professional groups known to have expressed a need for a uniform unit of measurement for short-term "learning experiences."

Response to the invitations was excellent, in spite of short notice. Forty-three persons representing thirty-three organizations attended the meeting. We feel that this indicates a broadly based awareness of the problem.

I think that it might be helpful if I recount for you some of the thinking which came out of this initial planning conference.

Paul Grogan of the University of Wisconsin, Robert Pitchell of the National University Extension Association and I presented a concept paper to the conference to initiate considerations and discussion. In this paper we pointed out that not only do present day circumstances require that an individual's formal education needs be carried out over a longer period of time, but also that the extent of his specialization must be made sharper and the timetable of his updating and renewal must be planned in a more systematic way.

In this paper we also pointed out that for purposes of national policy planning, no gross data are available on continuing education activities such as short courses, conferences, institutes, seminars, workshops, and correspondence courses. This is in direct contrast to the data which is available on regular credit work done at elementary, secondary and higher educational institutions.

Several short papers were also presented which indicated needs and viewpoints of specific users of continuing education.

The views of one of the nation's largest employers and training organizations were presented by J. Kenneth Mulligan of the United States Civil Service Commission. He pointed out that 1,008,780 Federal Government employees attended formal classroom training programs of eight hours or more last year. In addition to sponsoring 103 centers in 30 states, the District of Columbia and overseas, the Civil Service Commission conducted 188 courses for 45,833 Federal employees for a total of 909,365 classroom hours of instruction.

By considering these figures which apply solely to the Federal Government, one can readily imagine what the national problem of accounting for these educational activities is. Obviously the problem will grow tremendously in the future.

Mr. Mulligan very aptly expressed the problem in terms more common to economics:

He said that both producers and primary and secondary consumers of education want a uniform unit of measurement for non-credit continuing education.

Producers want it as a method of satisfying consumers (students) that they are getting a certain quantity of a valuable product.

Students, as primary consumers, want it to assist in getting jobs for advancement in pay or rank for recognition or as a step toward greater professionalization, or purely for avocational purposes.

Employers, as secondary consumers, want it for hiring, promoting, planning (inventory of available skills) and cost-benefit analysis.

Dean Russell F. W. Smith, speaking for university extension divisions, said that universities need a uniform unit of measurement for their own internal reporting and planning from one year to the next in continuing education, as well as for communication among institutions of higher education.

Len Brice of the American Society of Personnel Administrators reviewed the needs of professional societies in this field. He said that most professional societies of the individual membership types could definitely be classified as consumers of the continuing education product in the form of short courses, conferences and

workshops. A recognized unit of measurement for non-credit continuing education programs would indeed be a boon to their (professional societies) certification and accreditation efforts besides giving additional stimulus to their development programs for members. Recognition for courses taken in new techniques in the various professions would also have a worthwhile effect in interesting participants in same.

William Hardy, of the Education Department, United Auto Workers, discussed the need for a systematic approach from the paraprofessional viewpoint. He stated strongly the increasing desires of paraprofessional persons to expand professional entry training programs for professional growth and better job opportunities.

Two issues which were put before the conference were definitely decided. These points should be carefully noted: (1) We are researching the need for a uniform unit of measuring non-credit continuing education programs. We are not talking about a system of academic credits toward a degree or toward initial professional certification! The "academic credit hour" already takes care of this need. This distinction should be clearly made. (2) The conference decided that the scope of the problem should be broadly conceived. It was not to be limited to the needs of professionals, university graduates, and businessmen, but should cover paraprofessionals as well as professional groups.

The conference agreed upon the following items:

(1) There appears to be a significant national need for a uniform unit of measurement for non-credit continuing education activities;

(2) Development of a usable system appears to rest in unified and coordinated efforts on the part of the consumer of the educational product as well as the producer.

(3) That an eight-man task force group representing the associations and organizations present at the conference be appointed to develop a proposal for a joint effort to study the feasibility of a uniform unit for measurement of non-credit continuing education programs which could be used by all groups to meet current needs.

I have the honor to be the chairman of this task force.

To give you some idea of the breadth of interests being represented on this task force, let me give you the other members:

Len Brice, American Society of Personnel Administrators

Edward Cox, DuPont Company

Paul Grogan, University of Wisconsin

William L. Hardy, United Auto Workers

Reginald Jones, U. S. Civil Service Commission

Harold Marquiles, American Medical Association

Morris Ullman, U. S. Office of Education

It was decided that this group would meet on October 15th last in Washington, D. C. The National University Extension Association agreed to provide staff assistance as necessary.

On October 15th last this task force met at the Civil Service Commission in Washington, D. C. All the members previously mentioned were present with the exception of Dr. Harold Marquiles. Dr. Warren Ball has been appointed by the American Medical Association in the place of Dr. Harold Marquiles. In addition, Mr. Keith Glancy of the National University Extension Association was present to provide secretarial and staff assistance.

Since this whole concept is very much in the developmental stages, I believe that for proper understanding I should recount for you some of the points which were considered at this meeting and some of the conclusions which were reached.

It was the consensus of the group that some voluntary pilot programs be started just as soon as generally acceptable recommendations can be evolved. Emphasis was placed upon the urgency that these be started at as early a date as practicable. The reason for this urgency is that many professional societies, organizations, and associations are currently contemplating a variety of requirements for professional updating, and it is felt that an acceptable and established unit would be helpful to such organization before a uniform system can be established in the determination of the quantity of standard units to be required.

The task force affirmed the need for a uniform continuing education unit and then turned to the defining and developing of the unit itself.

I might mention some of the points which were made on this issue:

(1) It should be a simple unbreakable unit. As far as possible, it should be applicable to all types of continuing education experiences except those now labeled "academic credit."

(2) The continuing education unit should be applicable to a planned and organized educational experience, primarily on a post-secondary level. The key word in the definition would seem to be "organized"--an organized education experience--

(3) The continuing education unit should be equal to ten clock hours or twelve class hours of learning experience. Since these methods of expression are of equal duration, use of one or the other will be based upon the individual circumstances. Also you will note that such a module will fit into the decimal system.

(4) The continuing education unit should reflect equal effort and provide reasonable results when applied to a variety of educational situations. It should provide a meaningful measure of personal and professional intellectual growth.

(5) The name "continuing education unit" was the tentative choice of the task force.

Considerable work has yet to be done on the establishment of guidelines and criteria. Many terms must be carefully defined. Limitations in its operational use must be delineated. What educational experiences are to be included? How is the Unit to be handled administratively?

The task force did, however, come up with some general definitions and conclusions.

(1) The application of the c.e.u. should be user oriented and not sponsor oriented; and thus the validation of learning experiences and their recognition will come from the people involved in continuing education, their employers and professional societies, rather than entirely from institutions.

(2) The very fact that a unit of measurement has been defined will generate interest and pressure for its adoption by the sponsors of continuing education and its acceptance by the users.

(3) The participation of institutions of higher education, as in the example of more than 140 NUEA institutions, along with the development of detailed criteria and standards to which all sponsors of continuing education can subscribe, will serve the purposes of quality assurance evolving out of the sense of responsibility of the participating organizations to elevate, police, and maintain standards along with the evaluation of the users.

(4) If a program brochure carries the statement, "This program carries _____ continuing education units," there develops a sense of obligation on the part of the producer to provide a quality program.

(5) There should be a fair amount of self-policing and self-elevation by virtue of comparisons which might be drawn during parallel programs and parallel institutional or organizational effort.

(6)Organizations sponsoring educational programs basically will be responsible for setting the unit value of a program, based upon the guidelines. Use of advisory boards or committees may help to facilitate this step along standardized or widely accepted lines.

(7) The consumer will interpret the value (to him) of the c. e. u. on the basis of the personnel involved, the institution or organization responsible for the programs, and the material or outline used, to the extent that this level of detail is known about the offering. Individual organizations will assign their own set of values or standards to

the c.e.u. in relation to their own requirements, relating both to the nature and number of c.e.u. accumulated with respect to a given occupational or educational background and the time frame in which the continuing education has been accomplished.

Another meeting of the entire National Planning Conference will probably be held in February or early March of 1969.

The Task Force will meet again on December 10, 1968.

In concluding my remarks, I want to reiterate one point in particular: A system of records built upon the "continuing education unit is in no way designed to overlap, mix with, or supplant the existing system of academic credit!"

This is the point at which I feel that the most misunderstanding might occur. The c.e.u. is designed to supplement or even parallel the existing system. It is designed to give recognition for continuing education experiences of an organized but non-credit nature.

Circumstances today, the individual, the professional society and association, private business and industry, and the government desire some uniform unit of measuring the continuing education learning experience today.

Today, more than ever before, education must be responsive to the needs of the great outside world. The need here is clearly seen. We cannot fail to utilize our best efforts in a concerted attempt to meet that need.